

THE BLIND AMERICAN

INKPRINT EDITION

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN BROTHERHOOD FOR THE BLIND
A CHARITABLE AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

2652 SHASTA ROAD BERKELEY 8, CALIF.

NOVEMBER ISSUE ---- 1962



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National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

THE BLIND AMERICAN

Published monthly in Braille and inkprint and distributed free to the blind by the American Brotherhood for the Blind, Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, President. National headquarters and editorial offices at 2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley 8, California.

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VOLUME II

November 1962

NO. 11

THE BLIND AMERICAN

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"SERVICES" UNDER SOCIAL SECURITY: PROMISE OR PITFALL?

By Russell Kletzing

(Editor's note: Mr. Kletzing is president of the National Federation of the Blind. His article was first released as a bulletin by the NFB in November.)

Recent years have witnessed a mounting attack across the land directed against the Aid to Dependent Children program in particular, and more generally against the welfare programs and philosophy of public assistance. In the wake of this assault, as you know, Congress and the Administration have incorporated various "service" provisions into the newly enacted amendments to the Social Security Act.

These new service provisions not confined to ADC but have been broadly extended to the programs of Old Age Assistance, Aid to the Totally Disabled, and Aid to the Blind. As an inducement to the states to accept this battery of social services, the law provides for an increase in federal reimbursement from 50 to 75 percent to cover their administrative costs.

It is time to take a hard look at these new services which have been thrust upon the recipients of public aid -- in order to judge as accurately as possible just what they amount to, how they work in practice, and whether they are moving the welfare programs and their clients.

It is already clear, of course, from numerous official pronouncements what these offerings are supposed to be aimed at. On one hand they are said to be geared to the established public assistance goals of self-support and self-care. On the other hand they have been justified as alternatives to existing support and relief provisions -- as witness the recurrent phrases "services instead of support . . . rehabilitation instead of relief."

The full list of the specified services -- as contained in a state letter (No. 587) of August 31, 1962, from the Bureau of Family Services -- is set forth below, following our analysis of the import and direction of these requirements.

Dangers and Prospects

Services of one or another kind have, to be sure, been rendered to recipients of Aid to the Blind ever since the original establishment of such programs by the states. Social services have been undeniably effective in the past in assisting many blind persons to achieve more adequate orientation and adjustment (physical, social and economic), thus reducing the degree of their dependency. It is desirable that these services should be maintained and strengthened, as they will be through the increased federal participation in their costs. But implicit in the service provisions are certain serious pitfalls which must be guarded against by the National Federation and by each state affiliate. These dangers may be briefly summarized:

First: the provisions of services cannot be permitted to obscure the primary and overriding concern of public welfare -- that is, to provide a reasonably adequate grant of assistance with which the recipient of Aid to the Blind can purchase the necessities of life. As late as last June the average grant of the blind-aid recipient for the country as a whole was only \$69.39 -- woefully inadequate to meet ordinary and elemental needs in our modern society. Services are fine -- so is medical care -- but the fundamental responsibility of those administering the aid program is to press for a grant of assistance which will purchase food, shelter and clothing for the needy blind person. As Professor Jacobus tenBroek stated in May to the California Association of Health and Welfare: "Once provide 'services instead of' adequate support, and those services might be multiplied indefinitely without relieving the basic economic need and its accompanying anxiety. What is required in public welfare is not less support but more and better support; not less relief but more adequate and constructive forms of relief."

Second: the new service provisions already are being used, not very subtly, to peddle the scrambled-categories concept which apparently obsesses so many public welfare administrators and workers. Note the appearance of such unspecific phrases as "services for handicapped adults in need of protection"; "services to aged and disabled adults"; "services to adults with potentials for self-care," and so on. This total disregard of the special needs incident to blindness, or to old age, or to total and permanent disability, is evidently part of the present official drive first to integrate and next to obliterate the present categories under public assistance. This retrogressive effort to intermix Aid to the Blind with that to other groups of

disadvantaged persons must be vigorously opposed wherever it rears its head -- and it has done so nowhere more glaringly than in the Department of HEW's description of "services."

Third: the service concept may well be used to encourage the tendency on the part of the social worker and administrator to dictate to the individual blind recipient how he is to spend his aid grant, where he should live, and generally how he should arrange his life. In other words, the concept provides a new and handy vehicle which welfare personnel will be sorely tempted to exploit in order to invade the most sacred of all precincts -- the absolute right of the client to make his own choices.

Fourth and finally: the danger is now increased that the amount of the aid payment may become contingent upon the acceptance of "services." This cannot be permitted to happen. The acceptance of an available service must depend upon only one thing -- namely, the voluntary willingness of the client to receive the service without any strings whatever with respect to his grant of aid.

State organizations of the blind should not only be on guard against abuses committed in the magic name of "services"; more affirmatively, they should seek an expansion of constructive state services related to the program, since 75 percent of the costs of such expended services might well be reimbursed by the federal government. Such a move is particularly desirable in those states which presently lack a sufficient number of home teachers for the blind. Again, if the existing vocational rehabilitation service for the blind is inadequate or ineffective, the new service provisions can be utilized to support the demand that vocational rehabilitation be placed within the state welfare department. Furthermore, a determined effort should be exerted toward requiring state welfare departments to employ specialists in providing those concrete services designed to promote self-care and self-support for recipients of Aid to the Blind.

Do the new service provisions in public welfare contain a promise -- or a pitfall? Probably they will turn out to be a mixture of both. But the extent to which services prove more helpful than harmful to the needy blind person will depend principally upon the unremitting vigilance of the organized blind in every state with respect to their actual administration. Let us all make this watchful vigilance our pressing concern.

Text of Official Letter

The new "social services for 75 percent federal financial partici-

pation" -- of which the first three are required for 75 percent reimbursement and the latter three are optional to the states -- are described as follows in the federal bureau's letter to state public assistance agencies:

A. Aged and disabled adults in need of protection

Services to and in behalf of such adults in respect to enlistment of relatives, friends and other resources for needed planning and protection; securing and maintaining safe living conditions; personal, home and money management; securing and using needed medical services, and, when indicated, assisting in arranging group care in medical or social care facilities; securing legal services and protection, including assisting guardians in the restoration of legal rights.

B. Aged and disabled adults requiring services to remain in or return to their own homes or communities

Services for such adults in relation to: adaptations and management in own home; appropriate living arrangements; enlistment of relatives, friends and other resources; securing needed medical services in own home; assisting to have institutional care as needed; and, planning for return to own home or community.

C. Blind and other disabled adults with potentials for self-support in whole or in part

Services for such adults in exploring interests and potentials for self-support and in respect to: personal or family problems deterring self-support; assessment of health condition, employment skills and employment potentials; securing and using needed medical care; and when indicated, securing training opportunities, securing and maintaining appropriate employment and securing aids essential to travel and employment.

D. Adults with potentials for self-care

Services for such adults in respect to: home and living adjustments and management; enlistment of relatives and volunteer services; meeting daily needs of personal care;

securing and using medical resources; and opportunities for using and developing skills or special interests.

E. Adults isolated or estranged from family

Services for such adults in respect to: enlisting and maintaining interest of family members; encouraging communication and visiting; and participation of family members in planning to meet current and predictable needs of the adult.

F. Services for former or potential applicants and recipients

Services to secure or maintain appropriate living arrangements or care, protective services; services in planning use and management of financial resources. In addition for titles X and XIV, services to maintain or secure employment.

PROGRESSIVE BLIND OF MISSOURI INAUGURATED

By Gwen Phillips

(Editor's note: Miss Phillips was director of publicity for the Missouri convention described below.)

The first annual convention of the Progressive Blind of Missouri, Inc., was held in Jefferson City November 16 through 18 -- heralding the formal inauguration of the state affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind.

Following a preliminary organizational meeting Friday evening, the convention was officially opened Saturday morning with a variety of activities highlighted by the adoption of a permanent constitution and election of officers to lead the fledgling organization.

Officers chosen were: president, George A. Rittgers; vice-

president, Floyd Mohler; recording secretary, Tiny Beedle; corresponding secretary, Doris Miller; and treasurer, Cotton Busby. The board members are Helen Mohler, LaVon Garten and Cotton Busby.

Main speaker at the convention banquet was John N. Taylor, past president of the National Federation of the Blind, who based his stirring address on the three keystones of the NFB seal: Equality, Opportunity, and Security. John is an excellent speaker, and the philosophy he brings to us from the National Federation is always a measure of opportunity and of hope.

Another feature of the banquet was Mr. Taylor's presentation on behalf of the Progressive Blind of the Dr. Jacobus tenBroek Award (inaugurated by the Progressive Blind of Missouri) to the Uptown Optimist Club of Kansas City for its volunteer reading of difficult textbooks for blind college students. Mr. Taylor also conferred affiliate charters upon the Kansas City Chapter of the Progressive Blind and to the Mid-Missouri Association of the Blind.

In other convention activity, Mr. Taylor presented an enlightening report concerning the official interpretation presently being made by federal administrators of the newly added Title XVI merging public aid programs for the blind, the aged and the disabled. The latest legislative report of the NFB was read to the convention. Among the PBM's distinguished guests were Mr. and Mrs. William Jackson of RITE, well-known service organization for the blind.

NEW JERSEYANS FIGHT FOR RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

The persistent campaign of the Associated Blind of New Jersey for a state right-to-organize measure modeled on lines of the federal Kennedy Bill has been stalled by the governor's refusal to sign the measure previously approved by the legislature.

The bill, which would grant to New Jersey's 10,000 blind persons a statutory right to express collective opinions and views through their own voluntary organizations free from interference by official agencies or other bodies, was the product of coordinated efforts by the ABNJ

and the Trenton Association of the Blind under the leadership of ABNJ board chairman Robert H. Owens.

Its controversial career in the legislature and state house has been watched with unusual interest by newspapers of the state -- as illustrated by a recent article carrying the byline of John O. Davies, Jr., state house correspondent for the Gannett chain of newspapers, which was prominently featured on the editorial page of the Plainfield DAILY COURIER-NEWS and the Camden COURIER-POST.

Davies' report gave major attention to a statement by Owens on behalf of the blind associations charging that official and quasi-official state agencies have sought "a deliberate denial of the rights of assembly and expression to blind people."

The newspaper article also quoted the negative views of spokesmen for Governor Hughes, who reportedly chose to regard the right-to-organize bill as the unfortunate result of a "failure of communications" between the state commission for the blind and various groups of blind people. The bill was said by these sources to "constitute a problem by granting through a special law an already established right of assembly that could cause other groups to question whether their rights should be underlined by a similar law," according to the article.

Press and public interest in the fight of the New Jersey blind for freedom of association and expression was rekindled by a special meeting on October 3 called by the governor's legal counsel to hear the conflicting views of representatives of various organizations of the blind, the commission for the blind, the state welfare department and the state attorney general.

The meeting was opened by Owens, who presented statements supporting the measure received from Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, president of the American Brotherhood for the Blind, and others. The tenBroek statement, sent as a telegram, read as follows:

"Though it has been in operation for only a year, the California right to organize law is proving beneficial. Some agency heads opposed it as unnecessary, others as undesirable. The first argument is self-defeating and the second is erroneous. In those areas in which the law was unnecessary it has done no harm. In those areas where there was covert and overt interference with the right to organize, agency personnel has now changed tactics to the mutual

satisfaction of the agency and the blind. The blind feel freer, more self-reliant, more active in their own improvement.

"Improved relations with agencies have increased mutual cooperation. It is significant too that the disabled covered by the law have now for the first time begun to create organizations for self-expression and self-improvement. All in all, California's new law has confounded the fears of opponents and added a positively beneficial element to the outlook of the blind and the administration of programs intended for their benefit."

Later in the governor's meeting, Owens presented prepared testimony on behalf of the Associated Blind of New Jersey and also of the Trenton Association (of which he is president). His statement maintained that despite the guarantee of basic constitutional rights to all citizens, "interference by individuals, organizations, official and quasi-official agencies effects a deliberate denial of the rights of assembly and expression to blind people."

Owens cited three separate examples of activities by official and quasi-official agencies to "illustrate how a paternal, over-protective state can interfere to a point of denying basic rights." His statement concluded:

"In recognizing, as a public policy, that any blind person has a right to join a voluntary organization of the blind, Senate Bill No. 93 is expected to create an awareness among professional workers in programs for the blind that their counsel and influence against such organizations, or against clients holding membership in such organizations, is an interference with basic constitutional rights

"Numerous individuals, organizations, official and quasi-official agencies stand ready to pour cream for the blind -- without bothering to ask whether those they would serve might prefer their coffee black. They profess to speak for the blind, apparently convinced blind persons are not capable of speaking for themselves.

"What [State] Senate President Frank S. Farley's proposal says; what former Senator John F. Kennedy said; what New Jersey representatives Glenn and Wallhauser said; what New Jersey's lawmakers said is, in effect, that 'right to organize' legislation for the blind is not superfluous. It is necessary recognition of the equality of blind citizens under law."

A DEFINITION OF BLINDNESS

By Kenneth Jernigan

(Editor's note: Mr. Jernigan, director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, is first vice-president of the National Federation of the Blind.)

Before we can talk intelligently about the problems of blindness or the potentialities of blind people, we must have a workable definition of blindness. Most of us are likely familiar with the generally accepted legal definition: visual acuity of not greater than 20/200 in the better eye with correction or a field not subtending an angle greater than 20 degrees. But this is not really a satisfactory definition. It is, rather, a way of recognizing in medical and measurable terms something which must be defined not medically or physically but functionally.

Putting to one side for a moment the medical terminology, what is blindness? Once I asked a group of high school students this question, and one of them replied -- apparently believing that he was making a rather obvious statement -- that a person is blind if he "can't see." When the laughter subsided, I asked the student if he really meant what he had said. He replied that he did. I then asked him whether he would consider a person blind who could see light but who could not see objects -- a person who would bump into things unless he used a cane, a dog, or some other travel aid and who would, if he depended solely on the use of his eyesight, walk directly into a telephone pole or fire plug. After some little hesitation the student said that he would consider such a person to be blind. I agreed with him and then went on to point out the obvious -- that he literally did not mean that the definition of blindness was to be unable to see.

I next told this student of a man I had known who had "normal" (20/20) visual acuity in both eyes but who had such an extreme case of sensitivity to light that he literally could not keep his eyes open at all. The slightest amount of light caused such excruciating pain that the only way he could open his eyes was by prying them open with his fingers. Nevertheless, this person, despite the excruciating pain he felt while doing it, could read the eye chart without difficulty. The

readings showed that he had "normal sight." This individual applied to the local Welfare Department for Public Assistance to the Blind and was duly examined by their ophthalmologist. The question I put to the student was this: "If you had been the ophthalmologist, would you have granted the aid or not?"

His answer was, "Yes."

"Remember," I told him, "under the law you are forbidden to give aid to any person who is not actually blind. Would you still have granted the assistance?" The student said that he would. Again, I agreed with him, but I point out that, far from his first facetious statement, what he was saying was this: It is possible for one to have "perfect sight" and still in the physical, literal sense of the word be blind.

I then put a final question to the student. I asked him whether if a sighted person were put into a vault which was absolutely dark so that he could see nothing whatever, it would be accurate to refer to that sighted person as a blind man. After some hesitation and equivocation the student said, "No." For a third time I agreed with him. Then I asked him to examine what we had established:

1. To be blind does not mean that one cannot see. (Here again I must interrupt to say that I am not speaking in spiritual or figurative terms but in the most literal sense of the word.)
2. It is possible for an individual to have "perfect sight" and yet be physically and literally blind.
3. It is possible for an individual not to be able to see at all and still be a sighted person.

What, then, in light of these seeming contradictions is the definition of blindness? In my way of thinking it is this: One is blind to the extent that he must devise alternative techniques to do efficiently those things which he would do with sight if he had normal vision. An individual may properly be said to be "blind" or a "blind person" when he has to devise so many alternative techniques -- that is, if he is to function efficiently -- that his pattern of daily living is substantially altered. It will be observed that I say alternative not substitute techniques, for the word substitute connotes inferiority, and the alternative techniques employed by the blind person need not be inferior to visual

techniques. In fact, some of them are superior. The usually accepted legal definition of blindness already given (that is, visual acuity of less than 20/200 with correction or a field of less than 20 degrees) is simply one medical way of measuring and recognizing that anyone with better vision than the amount mentioned in the definition will (although he may have to devise some alternative techniques) likely not have to devise so many such techniques as to alter substantially his patterns of daily living. On the other hand, anyone with less vision than the mentioned in the legal definition will usually (I emphasize the word usually, for such is not always the case) need to devise so many such alternative techniques as to alter quite substantially his patterns of daily living.

It may be of some interest to apply this standard to the three cases already discussed:

First, what of the person who has light perception but sees little or nothing else? In at least one situation he can function as a sighted person. If, before going to bed, he wishes to know whether the lights are out in his home, he can simply walk through the house and "see". If he did not have light perception, he would have to use some alternative technique -- touch the bulb, tell by the position of the switch, have some sighted person give him the information, or devise some other method. However, this person is still quite properly referred to as a blind person. This one visual technique which he uses is such a small part of his overall pattern of daily living as to be negligible in the total picture. The patterns of his daily living are substantially altered. In the main he employs alternative techniques to do those things which he would do with sight if he had normal vision -- that is, he does if he functions efficiently.

Next, let us consider the person who has normal visual acuity but cannot hold his eyes open because of his sensitivity to light. He must devise alternative techniques to do anything which he would do with sight if he had normal vision. He is quite properly considered to be a "blind person."

Finally, what of the sighted person who is put into a vault which has no light? Even though he can see nothing at all, he is still quite properly considered to be a "sighted person." He uses the same techniques that any other sighted person would use in a similar situation. There are no visual techniques which can be used in such circumstances. In fact, if a blind person found himself in such a situation, he might very well have a variety of techniques to use.

I repeat that, in my opinion, blindness can best be defined not physically or medically but functionally or sociologically. The alternative techniques which must be learned are the same for those born blind as for those who become blind as adults. They are quite similar (or should be) for those who are totally blind or nearly so and those who are "partially sighted" and yet are blind in the terms of the usually accepted legal definition. In other words, I believe that the complex distinctions which are often made between those who have partial sight and those who are totally blind, between those who have been blind from childhood and those who have become blind as adults are largely meaningless. In fact, they are often harmful since they place the wrong emphasis on blindness and its problems. Perhaps the greatest danger in the field of work for the blind today is the tendency to be hypnotized by jargon.

MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER WINS TENBROEK AWARD

The first annual Dr. Jacobus tenBroek Award of the Associated Blind of Massachusetts -- given to the chapter which has "made the most significant contribution in behalf of the welfare of the blind" -- was presented to the ABM's Worcester chapter by State President Manuel Rubin at ceremonies accompanying the Massachusetts convention September 22.

The state organization, an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind, cited the Associated Blind of Worcester for its signal contributions during the past year to research on diabetes, with particular reference to its connection with blindness.

The text of Mr. Rubin's speech of presentation follows:

"The Associated Blind of Massachusetts is a great crusade. A great crusade, by its very nature, is a positive movement against evil. Ours is no exception. We are against indifference and callousness and custodialism, and sometimes even hostility, on the part of some public and private agencies for the blind, and we are against

an apathetic society unwilling or unable to understand that blind people too have a right to employment, security and independence.

"But the writers of our Constitution very wisely refrained from saying what we are against. They declared what we are for: namely, to promote the social and economic welfare of the blind.

"The question came up recently before the executive committee of the Associated Blind of Massachusetts as to whether our chapters are doing all they can to promote the social and economic welfare of the blind. It was generally agreed they were not. Consequently, it was decided to create 'The Dr. Jacobus tenBroek Award', in the form of a plaque, to be given that chapter which, in the opinion of the judges, made the most significant contribution in behalf of the welfare of the blind -- not in a restrictive sense, but the blind as a whole.

"We hope that each chapter will make the winning of this award a vital part of its annual program.

"Dr. Jacobus tenBroek personifies the noblest aspirations of all of us to secure for ourselves and our fellow blind the greatest measure of security and independence. His life is living proof that lack of sight need not be the end of the road. It can be a challenge to scale even greater heights. A founding father and for twenty years president of the National Federation of the Blind, professor, scholar, public servant, humanitarian -- his is the star we are proud to hitch our wagon to.

"It is in this spirit that we offer -- and that you vie with each other for this award. I hope the winner will display it proudly in his meeting place, and find in it a source of real and lasting inspiration."

WHAT IS AN ORIENTATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND?

By Pauline Gomez

(Editor's note: Miss Gomez is president of the New Mexico Federation of the Blind and editor of the organization's monthly newsletter.)

An Orientation Center for the Blind is a place where blind adults come of their own choice for the techniques and experiences which will help them step out into society and lead normal lives.

There are about half a dozen centers for adult blind throughout the country; but the majority of these continue to be influenced by the age-old misconception that blind people need maximum protection, that they can perform only limited activities, and that they are not completely capable of thinking for themselves. The California Orientation Center in Oakland and the Iowa Orientation Center in Des Moines operate with the firm conviction that blind persons are not different from their sighted neighbors, that they can perform unlimited activities, and that they are perfectly capable of thinking for themselves.

A student enrolled in the centers mentioned above is treated with the utmost respect and is allowed to plan his own schedule and to determine his needs. The student's desire to travel independently, and to learn braille and typing for better means of communication are fulfilled. The student strengthens his abilities, and acquires new techniques in handling his household and business responsibilities, and discovers that he can be normal and creative once more.

If a student at an orientation center is a graduate from a school for the blind such a center provides training and experiences which most schools for the blind neglect, such as: travel training with a cane, and braille and typing instructions useful for employment. Many students from a school for the blind lack the necessary confidence and skill in using ordinary kitchen tools, in preparing meals, using sewing machines, and power tools. Sometimes these students even lack the ability to make their own decisions, and solve their problems.

An Orientation Center for the Blind meets individual needs; for example, a prospective college student has the opportunity to brush up on language arts.

If a person who has recently lost his sight has the opportunity to attend an orientation center, he will leave there not only able to travel independently, but also able to read braille, use the typewriter, take over household activities once more and transact business relations with greater confidence; and it is possible that he will be ready to go back into the same trade or profession he engaged in before he lost his sight. Graduates from both the California and the Iowa Orientation Centers are back at work as electricians, auto mechanics, teachers, attorneys and housewives. Others have found a new trade or profession such as medical secretaries, switchboard operators and vending stand operators.

Blind persons and even staff members of most state agencies for the blind have not correctly interpreted the real objectives of an orientation center.

Is an orientation center a vocational school? No. It has vocational characteristics only to the extent of providing a person with the techniques and experiences to function normally as a blind person, and in promoting a trade or profession that does not require technical skills and formal study. Students leaving an orientation center are ready to continue their education elsewhere or to go directly into employment.

Is an orientation center a clinic for the blind? An orientation center is not for the purpose of diagnosis. The environment at a properly operated orientation center is the best stimulus for the mental and physical health, and the emotional stability, of a blind person.

The blind directors of the two centers I am describing are well aware that there is no better treatment for any adult than the opportunity to be useful and know that he can earn his own living.

Is an orientation center for the blind similar to a workshop facility for the blind? Most workshops throughout the country claim to be both training and employment centers; and they are weak in either direction. An orientation center meets the individual needs of a blind person, enabling him to seek further training and to be ready for employment. The directors of the California and the Iowa Orientation Centers believe that an orientation center cannot function successfully over a broom shop. Why? Because blind persons making brooms or weaving baskets are only a reminder to blind persons seeking orientation that these are the only things that a blind person can do.

An Orientation Center for the Blind is a symbol of modern thinking -- that every individual is valuable to society and that he has something to contribute, great or small, regardless of his physical disability.

REHAB CONFERENCE OFFERS NEW HOPE

Concerted action on the part of private industry, public agencies and medical science to alleviate the blighting effects of disability has been predicted as a result of an unusual national conference on rehabilitation held at the University of Pennsylvania, October 17 and 18.

The main problem attacked in the sessions was that of improving communication and education in the rehabilitation field, according to a lead article -- "Tomorrow's Hope for Today's Handicapped" -- published in the November issue of the JOURNAL OF AMERICAN INSURANCE.

The conference, sponsored jointly by the University of Pennsylvania and the American Mutual Insurance Alliance, brought together 30 "of the most eminent authorities available in rehabilitation and related activities," the journal reported. In addition a selected audience of 250 was invited to join in panel and group discussions and subsequently to apply the lessons learned to their professional activities.

Besides emphasizing the need for broadened public awareness of goals and issues in rehabilitation of the disabled, the conference sought to better communicative relations with respect to such groups as employers and insurance carriers, workers and labor organizations, attorneys representing both employers and workers, and the medical profession itself.

The role of the insurance industry was given special attention by a panel of authorities who pointed out that if insurance companies themselves accept rehabilitation as an indispensable aspect of medical

care and insist on rehabilitation programs for their injured beneficiaries, the result should be a "chain reaction" with corresponding demand for trained personnel.

Another problem receiving emphasis was the vital necessity for an enlightened medical profession, according to the insurance journal. "The present system of medical practice was held to be not optimal for rehabilitation. Continuity of care is interrupted by mobility of the population, by 'solo' practice of physicians as differentiated from group practice, and by heavy case loads," it was said.

Conference participants noted that there are now about 1,724 rehabilitation facilities or centers operating in the various states as specialized agencies. One major challenge facing these centers was said to be the development of resources for financing rehabilitation services on the basis of individual needs of the patients as determined by competent professional evaluation.

New and encouraging prospects for rehabilitation of physically and mentally handicapped persons were held out by virtually all conference experts on the basis of findings that: "From early beginnings in workmen's compensation, the idea of rehabilitation is now universally endorsed; it is an implicit part of the OASDI disability program of the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare; it is a major goal of workmen's compensation; and it will become increasingly important in the life, health and accident insurance field."

The ways in which "new horizons are already becoming milestones" were detailed by speakers who reported that year by year we are beginning to rehabilitate disabled groups never helped before. New types of programs assertedly are now being developed for the restoration of disabled public assistance recipients, for the mentally retarded and mentally ill, for rehabilitation of the deaf and for those with speech and hearing disorders -- as well as for the chronically ill and the aged, and for younger persons with special problems.

Among the "essentials" of rehabilitation agreed upon by the conferring experts was a proposition long recognized and stressed by organizations of the blind: "Rehabilitation can be successfully implemented only in a society which is willing to utilize the abilities of a handicapped person to make him a productive citizen."

NFB SETS 1963 CONVENTION

(Editor's note: The following is a bulletin issued recently by the NFB to its members.)

The 23rd anniversary convention of the National Federation of the Blind will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from Wednesday, July 3, through Saturday, July 6, 1963.

The Sheraton, one of Philadelphia's newest and finest hotels, is located at 1725 Pennsylvania Boulevard, Philadelphia. Rates for all rooms will be \$7.00 per day, single, and \$11.00 per day for double or twin-bed accommodations.

Please write directly to the hotel, as soon as possible, for your reservations.

The Sheraton would seem to be ideal in every respect for the purposes of our gathering, and we are fortunate in having secured extremely advantageous arrangements through the good offices and hard bargaining of our convention chairman and first vice-president, Ken Jernigan. The hotel is located directly across from the railroad station, in the heart of downtown Philadelphia. There are numerous good and inexpensive restaurants in the immediate vicinity. The Sheraton will furnish ample free parking, in a garage connected to the hotel by an underground passage. Arrangements have been made for all convention needs including hospitality rooms and committee chambers, auditorium with public-address service, and banquet facilities.

The convention will begin at 10 A.M. Wednesday and adjourn promptly at 5 P.M. Saturday, in line with our custom of recent years. You may therefore make your personal travel plans accordingly.

Among other convention activities, exciting and informative tours are presently being planned by the national convention chairman, with the close cooperation of our people in Pennsylvania. In particular, Ken has enjoyed the warm and productive collaboration of various groups and individuals in Philadelphia, such as the Library for the Blind and Volunteer Services for the Blind. Frank Lugiano and Frank Rennard, state and local hosts, respectively, for the convention, have been greatly instrumental in working out the many excellent

arrangements which promise to make the 1963 Philadelphia convention an event and a time to remember.

THE MAILBOX

(Editor's note: THE BLIND AMERICAN welcomes correspondence from readers on topics bearing on the welfare and well-being of Americans -- especially those blind or disadvantaged. Letters should be addressed to: Editor, THE BLIND AMERICAN, American Brotherhood for the Blind, Inc., 2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley 8, California.)

To The Editor:

An article in the September BLIND AMERICAN dealt with a comparison of the publicity given to the fund-raising by the Pilot and the Seeing-Eye dog organizations. Most of the blind, I think, would be better off were they able to get information like this relative to every organization working in any field in behalf of the blind.

Another need of the blind, particularly here in Southern California, was called to my attention some time ago by Mr. E. E. McNiel of this city, who was forced to leave Southern California and go to the Oakland home for the blind to work -- although he was past 60 years of age and had saved enough of his own money to pay board and room. He had been living in cheap rooming houses with other blind persons, always receiving poor food and accommodations. It was not a question of money, but rather that the three largest hotels were refusing to admit blind persons.

The Alta Vista Club was a 100-room hotel located in the Silver Lake district of Los Angeles where myself and about 65 blind people lived and were very happy, until it was condemned within a few months of its beginning by the Building and Safety Commission.

The poor food and accommodations for the blind in California are all the more surprising considering that recreation centers such as

the one in Glendale and the one in East Los Angeles (known as Helen Keller Park) are being set up at great expense. Such recreation centers do not need to be put up anywhere, because the City of Los Angeles and County both have playgrounds and recreation centers, equipped with dining rooms and dancing facilities, that are open and unused every day of the week, and can be obtained free for the asking by a responsible blind organization. Yet thousands of dollars continue to be poured into recreation centers, while the blind move from place to place looking for better homes -- such as the Alta Vista Club was. Before anyone in California puts out any more money (public or private) on recreation centers, it is our hope that someone will keep in mind that the State Welfare Board has approved of the budget for board and room for any blind person receiving aid of \$127.00 a month for room, board and bath. I understand that there are many who can and are prepared to do that, with their own cooking in an apartment, and also that the Board has approved a budget of \$64.00 for one person or \$90.00 for two people sharing an apartment. Then, too, there are many blind persons like myself who wish to rent a hotel room and eat meals out. The Board has approved of a budget of as much as \$64.00 for room rent. While these figures are the maximum, the amount of money can be obtained by anyone who demonstrates this need.

Anyone who does not believe that housing and room-and-board for blind persons are practical, need go no further than Fresno to see the Senior Citizen's Village of 550 housing units, designed for people over 60 years of age. It is a growing, money-making business -- as it would be for the blind in any centrally located district with recreation and transportation facilities.

I have been working on this idea and trying to get people interested in it for years. Has anyone else any suggestions?

Yours for better homes for the blind.

Sincerely,

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BROTHERS . . . & OTHERS

Iowa Students Win Honor. Three blind students from Iowa have been chosen to join the group of 30 blind Americans picked by the federal government to study Russian in a special language course at Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., according to an announcement in the Iowa Association for the Blind BULLETIN.

The Iowans who will take the two-year course, which carries assurance of employment, are Ramona Willoughby, Bill Kapler and Tom Rickford. Another Iowa student, Bob Anderson, reportedly has completed the language course and is presently employed by a federal government agency.

There were originally 250 applications submitted for the examination from all parts of the country, of whom 75 survived a screening process and took the rigorous all-day tests, the bulletin stated.

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New York Blind Gain Rights. Two significant strides forward took place in New York City this year, according to the JEWISH BRAILLE REVIEW, publication of the Jewish Braille Institute of America. First was reportedly the organizing of a blind group, known as the Blind Concessionaires Workers, into a full-fledged union affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The second development was said to be the signing of a contract between blind employees of vending stands and their blind employers (Concession Chief Operators of Stands in Federal and State Buildings, supervised by the New York Commission for the Blind).

The article noted that the group of employers had at first declined to negotiate but eventually sat down with their blind workers and hammered out a contract which, among other things, provides a grievance machinery to settle unwarranted firings and other disputes. Such matters as wages, minimum starting pay and employer contributions to welfare funds are to be submitted in future to arbitration before the American Arbitration Association. It was the union's proposal to submit all three disputed issues to arbitration, the journal said.

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Montana Wins Blue Ribbon. The following item is reprinted from the October issue of THE OBSERVER, a monthly newsletter of the Montana Association for the Blind: "The Georgia State Fair to be held in Macon during mid-October will feature a special competition limited to entries made by blind residents of the state We do not know that any of our Montana fairs have established special departments for blind competition, but we do know that a number of our blind people have, across the years, entered their products in competition with sighted people and have come off with ribbons. The latest prize-winner that we know of is Carl Miller of Billings, who received a blue ribbon for his entry, a beautiful rug, in the Midland Empire Fair at Billings in August. Lillian Hoffman, who regularly assists Carl in the production of rugs at his shop at 4113 Arden Avenue, had a hand in the selection of colors and pattern of the prize-winning rug. After many years' struggle during which time Carl had two eye operations, the latest of which restored a fair degree of travel vision, Carl has managed to develop a rug-weaving business that has now put him into the prize-winning class against all competition."

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Plan Survey on Eye Research. Plans for the first comprehensive survey of eye research in this country were announced recently. Research to Prevent Blindness, Inc., national voluntary agency with headquarters in New York, is undertaking the study "to help stimulate the greatest scientific attack ever undertaken to find means of preventing blindness."

In announcing survey plans, RPB President Robert E. McCormick, said that its findings are expected to provide objective information now lacking as a basis for assessing financial and manpower needs for eye research as well as the general directions which offer the most promising potential.

Dr. Thomas David Duane, professor and head of the department of ophthalmology at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, will direct the survey, which will include a detailed study of eye research programs and plans of all medical schools and major research organizations across the country.

"While considerable attention has been directed at conquering a multitude of man's ailments," McCormick said, "research to prevent blinding eye diseases has been sadly neglected. More than 30,000

Americans lose their sight each year," he said. "This is particularly tragic since medical scientists believe that nearly all those now destined to go blind could be saved by adequate research and prevention. Yes, in 1960, expenditures for eye research in this country totaled as little as \$6,000,000. In the same year, according to the U. S. Public Health Service, care, compensation, benefits and education for the blind cost an estimated \$500,000,000."

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NRA Names President. Don Russell, director of vocational rehabilitation for the State of Arkansas, became president of the National Rehabilitation Association, October 24. The NRA president-elect for the past year, Mr. Russell assumed full leadership at the close of the three-day national NRA conference at Detroit's Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel. He succeeds retiring president C. Esco Obermann, director of the St. Paul (Minn.) Rehabilitation Center.

Other NRA leaders for 1962-63, elected during the Detroit conference, include: president-elect, Charles L. Eby, director of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation; treasurer, F. Ray Power, director of the West Virginia Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; and board members-at-large -- Margarete Donnally, executive secretary of Aid Retarded Children, San Francisco, and Arthur DuBrow, associate executive director of the Connecticut Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Hartford.

Also announced at the October 23 conference banquet were recipients of NRA's annual awards for outstanding achievements in the field of rehabilitation. Outgoing NRA president Obermann awarded NRA's top honors as follows:

W. F. Faulkes Award (for outstanding technical achievement in the field of rehabilitation), to K. Vernon Banta, deputy executive secretary of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, Washington, D. C.

President's Award (for nontechnical achievement, reaching beyond the area of professional rehabilitation to honor services which otherwise contribute to the well-being of handicapped individuals), to A. Polk Jarrell, director of the Georgia Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Association.

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AB Rolls Drop. The number of persons helped by Aid to the Blind dropped slightly in August of this year, according to figures released in late October by the Social Security Administration of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The total figure for that month, 100,000, was down two-tenths of one percent in comparison with the preceding month. The federal agency also reported that medical assistance for the aged (MAA), newest of the federal-state assistance programs, showed an increase of nearly six percent with a total of 108,900 persons receiving services under the program.

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NCCB Convenes in Missouri. The National Church Conference of the Blind re-elected all its incumbent officers at a convention held at Kansas City, Missouri, last July. Next year's meeting will be held either in Louisville or Indianapolis, according to word from Iowa delegates to the conference: Mr. and Mrs. William Klontz, James Tanner and Edna May Bourne.

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Fight for Sight Award. Dr. Kenneth A. Simon and Dr. Sjoerd L. Bonting, researchers at the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness in Bethesda, Maryland, have received the "Fight for Sight" citation awarded by the National Council to Combat Blindness. The presentation was made at an awards banquet at which Dr. Simon accepted the \$500 and accompanying hand-lettered scroll signifying the honor.

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Jernigan Wins Praise. Kenneth Jernigan, first vice-president of the National Federation of the Blind and director of Iowa's state Commission for the Blind, was the subject of a laudatory editorial published October 22 in the Cedar Rapids (Ia.) GAZETTE. Partial text of the editorial follows:

"Four years ago under the jurisdiction of Kenneth Jernigan, the state of Iowa completely revised its program for rehabilitating the blind. The old YMCA building in Des Moines was purchased and the legislature upped the appropriation for the 1957-59 biennium to \$120,880 from \$57,440. It was increased to \$250,000 in 1959-61 and to \$400,000 for the present biennium.

"But this doesn't tell the entire story. This doesn't tell how much more money is coming back into the state treasury now than in 1957, when the present program was started, in the form of income taxes from blind people who have been trained to get and hold jobs that provide their complete support and leave them happier individuals in the process.

"The fact that a greater number of blind are being trained for self-supporting jobs instead of to rely on part-time homework and welfare rolls is due in large measure to Mr. Jernigan, who is blind himself. It was he who convinced the legislature that, given adequate appropriations to support a proper program, it would be possible to change the status of most blind persons from that of unhappy welfare cases to that of happy income producers. He and his staff are performing a most worthwhile public service."

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Two New Biographies. The life stories of two persons who have triumphed over blindness have recently been published. The Blinding Flash, by John Fray Turner (London: George G. Harrap, 1962) is the biography of Ken Rives, an Englishman blinded during World War II who was rehabilitated at St. Dunstan's and later became assistant to Sir Clutha Mackenzie. Rives at present a legal solicitor practicing in England.

This House Had Windows (London: Max Parrish, 1961) is the autobiography of David Scott Blackhall, blind poet and philosopher who is well-known in England for his inspirational radio programs and published writings.

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Canada Blind Urge Reforms. A resolution urging that allowable (exempt) income for unmarried blind pensioners be increased from \$1,380 to \$2,000 was passed at the recent annual convention of the Canadian Federation of the Blind, according to a report in VISION, quarterly publication of the Federation. The resolution also asked for an increase in the allowable income of a married blind individual.

The CFB convention, first to be held in Edmonton, Canada, also passed a resolution to abolish the means test for blind persons. It was argued that a sightless person today who makes a reasonable

income is not permitted to receive the government grant, whereas the Federation believes all blind men and women should be eligible. Among other resolutions was one urging that the blind should not be penalized by losing their blind pension at the age of 70.

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National Council Expands Research. The National Council to Combat Blindness has recently awarded 73 grants and fellowships totaling over \$250,000 to support eye research during the current fiscal year, according to a report in the SECRETARY'S NEWS-LETTER (publication of the National Committee for Research in Ophthalmology and Blindness). Among the Council's clinical service projects is the Fight for Sight Children's Eye Clinic at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, New York City -- said to be the only eye clinic in any general hospital in the eastern United States specifically designed, equipped and staffed to care for infants and children afflicted with eye problems.

The Council also pledged itself to continue support for operation of a mobile ophthalmic unit established in 1958 by a Fight for Sight grant to the Hebrew University Hospital in Jerusalem, Israel. This mobile eye clinic reportedly has been responsible for a significant reduction of trachoma in the area surrounding Jerusalem.

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Xavier Society Names Head. Rev. Arthur R. McGratty, S. J., was recently appointed as the new director of the Xavier Society for the Blind, succeeding Rev. Joseph B. O'Connell, S. J. The Xavier Society, founded in 1900, is said to be the only national publishing house concerned solely with furnishing the blind with Catholic books and textbooks in braille as well as with talking books. Offices are located at East 23rd Street, New York City.

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OVR Names Two Advisors. Appointment of two new members to the National Advisory Council on Vocational Rehabilitation was announced November 8 by Anthony J. Celebrezze, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. The new appointees, who will serve four-year terms on the Council, are Arthur S. Abramson, M. D., of New York City, and S. Richard Silverman, Ph.D., of St. Louis, Missouri. They fill vacancies caused by expiration of the terms of Mrs. Dorothy Devereux, Hawaii, and Weston Howland, Milton, Mass.

The Council reviews applications for grants submitted by private nonprofit groups and public organizations to help finance research and demonstration projects designed to solve vocational rehabilitation problems of nation-wide significance. Miss Mary E. Switzer, director of HEW's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, is chairman.

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